



PUEBLO OF POJOAQUE

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March 14, 2018

Secretary Marlene Dortch
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Pueblo of Pojoaque Opposition to draft Report and Order (WT 17-79)

Dear Chairman Pai and Members of the Commission:

The Pueblo of Pojoaque writes to oppose the draft Report and Order released on March 1, 2018 that purports to narrow the obligations of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and restricts tribal rights secured by those laws. The draft order's approach will be detrimental to tribal governments, tribal cultural and historic resources, and will do very little to encourage deployment of wireless service to areas, like those in the Pueblo of Pojoaque, that need it most.

Fifteen years ago, the FCC stated that it was impractical for it to consult on thousands of existing, new and proposed cell sites, despite its obligation to do so. In response, Indian Country endorsed the Tower Construction Notification System as an elegant solution that facilitated the telecommunications industry working directly with tribal nations to address issues of concern so that it would be unnecessary in nearly all cases for the FCC to engage in consultation. The alternative, which will be the outcome if the current order is approved, is that tribal nations will demand direct consultations with the FCC on potentially hundreds of larger tower sites, a far slower process than the tribal-industry process.

The Commission has a trust responsibility to tribal nations, not to the wireless industry. The draft Report and Order does not reflect this trust responsibility and diminishes the Pueblo of Pojoaque's ability to protect cultural and historic properties.

The draft Report and Order:

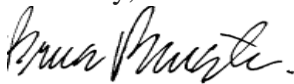
- (1) Concludes that small wireless facilities do not qualify as “undertakings” or “major federal actions”, thereby circumventing the protections of NHPA and NEPA;
- (2) Eliminates tribal fees for initial historic preservation assessments (which often number in the hundreds per month) by tribal governments, encouraging industry to exclusively rely on its own consultants whose understanding of Native culture is limited, rather than access the unique expertise of tribal nations with regard to impacts on their own cultural areas; and
- (3) Mischaracterizes the extent of formal consultation carried out prior to the release of the draft Report and Order by including listening sessions, briefings and other meetings that are not true consultations.

Rolling back protections for tribal cultural and historic properties will have grave consequences for the Pueblo of Pojoaque.

The Pueblo of Pojoaque has been continuously occupied since circa 850 AD. The landscape is rich with ancestral evidence such as buildings, farm fields, and intangible Traditional Cultural Properties. The strength and health of the community is about their ability to practice and participate in their cultural life; the landscape and long history are focal points for today’s religious and ceremonial practices. There are hundreds of these locations throughout the Pueblo’s lands. Therefore, any construction or alteration of the landscape possesses the potential to irrevocably alter, change, or destroy cultural sites. It is imperative that the community, through the Tribal Historic Preservation Office, has the opportunity to properly review any construction action on Pueblo lands. This is both an issue of sovereignty for the Pueblo as well as part of the federal laws that govern historic preservation and protection of cultural properties.

Once tribal cultural and historic properties are damaged, it is often irreversible. Therefore, like other tribes throughout the country, we will have no recourse if the deployment of wireless technology results in the destruction of our tribal cultural and historic properties. Accordingly, we ask that all Commissioners vote against adopting this draft Report and Order.

Sincerely,



Bruce Bernstein, PhD
Tribal Historic Preservation Officer